

Dear Financial and Taxation Committee,

I am reaching out to **encourage support for SB 2149.**

Volunteering for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention for over a decade in North Dakota I have seen the need for a 24/7/365 988 suicide and crisis phone line many times, including with many close friends and family members who have struggled with depression and suicidal ideation.

Everyone knows to dial 911 for a medical emergency. It is slowly becoming known throughout North Dakota to dial 988 for behavioral health emergencies. 911 is funded with a telecommunications user fee, it should be no different for 988.

Please help fund and support FirstLink and our 988 lifeline. They need to have a diverse and culturally competent workforce and pay their staff professional wages to provide quality service to those reaching out for help. They need updated technology and equipment to make sure that they are able to answer the 988 and 211 phone lines 24/7/365. SB 2149 would make this all possible.

Thank you for your time,

Derek Harnish  
Fargo, ND